

II. The Benchmark System for Monitoring the Countywide Planning Policies: Indicator Trends after 10 Years of GMA

Background

In 1990 the Washington State Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA). For the first time in the State's history, all urban counties and their cities were required to develop and adopt comprehensive plans and regulations to implement the plans. To achieve an interjurisdictional coordinated countywide plan, GMA further required that King County and its 31 cities first develop framework policies - the King County *Countywide Planning Policies* - to guide the development of the jurisdictions' plans.

This is the tenth year since the implementation of GMA in King County. The *Countywide Planning Policies* (CPPs) define the countywide vision for the county and cities' plans. The policies were developed by the Growth Management Planning Council, a group of 15 elected officials representing all King County citizens. They were adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council, and ratified by the cities in 1994. Since then, they have been amended several times.

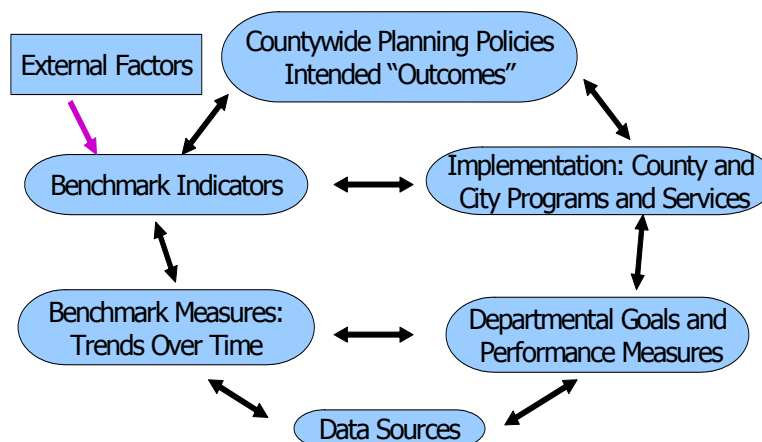
Purpose

The Countywide Planning Policies are goals for maintaining and improving the quality of life in King County during the next twenty years. The Benchmark Indicators tell us whether we are reaching those goals. As one of the first and most durable efforts at monitoring outcomes in the public sector, the King County Benchmark Program demonstrates how measurement of broad quality-of-life outcomes can help determine if public policy and programs are making a difference.

The purpose of King County's Benchmark Program is to provide the Growth Management Council and other users with a method for:

- Evaluating the overall progress of the County and its jurisdiction in managing growth, and
- Measuring how successfully the goals outlined in the Countywide Planning Policies are being implemented

Public outcome monitoring is a strategy for a change: it alerts us to what we are doing well, and to where we need to do better. It is intimately connected to both the policy goals that it monitors, and to the strategic planning, programs, and services that are intended to implement those goals. Effective implementation of countywide policies also depends on strategic planning and performance monitoring at the jurisdictional and departmental levels. For example, monitoring how efficiently we are using urban land countywide presumes that responsible jurisdictions and departments are undertaking the appropriate actions to use urban land efficiently, and are tracking the effectiveness of their programs in achieving the countywide goal. The diagram below is one way of envisioning the interplay of policy, program implementation, local performance monitoring, and countywide outcome monitoring.



Macro-level outcome measurements such as the 45 Benchmark Indicators selected in 1995 for monitoring by the GMPC, are often affected by external factors outside the control of government agencies. Some, such as the economic indicators, are less responsive to local government strategies than others, such as land use indicators. But policy goals imply that something can be done. Through concerted efforts - whether as public agencies, as community leaders, or as individual citizens - we can have *some* effect on all of these indicators. The intention is to use all the means at hand to create real, long-term improvement in the quality of our lives in King County. Tracking these indicators lets policy-makers know if that improvement is happening.

An Early Warning System

The Benchmark Indicators should provide early warning if the policies are not having their desired effects. In that case, the system should provide sufficient information to enable policy-makers to determine whether different actions to implement the policies are needed, or whether minor or major revisions to the policies are required. The Benchmark System can also be used to help the jurisdictions of King County establish priorities, take joint actions, and direct resources to solve problems identified in the *Countywide Planning Policies*.

The Ninth Annual Report

The King County Benchmark Program is in its ninth year of publishing an annual report on progress in meeting the goals of the Countywide Planning Policies. Formerly published as a single annual report, since 2003 it has been published in a bi-monthly format consisting of five topical reports. The eighth annual series began with the Land Use Report, published in August 2003, and concluded with the Environment Report, published in May 2004. The ninth annual series commenced with the publication of the Land Use Indicators at the end of August 2004. It will continue through 2005, with the publication of the Economic Indicators in early October 2004, the Affordable Housing Indicators in December 2004, the Transportation Indicators in February 2005, and the Environmental Indicators in April 2005. Past and current Benchmark publications are available at www.metrokc.gov/budget/benchmrk/

Highlights of the Most Recent Benchmark Indicators

Among the most important developments during the past year have been the initial signs of an economic recovery. Wages are up slightly in real dollars, particularly for those outside the software sector. Household income in real dollars has also increased since 2000, although earlier, less realistic estimates of household income have had to be revised downward. There are troubling trends in our economic outlook as well, however. Poverty in King County increased from 1990 – 2002, at a time when the poverty rate was declining on the national level. Income distribution has changed since 1990, with a higher percent of persons in both the lowest and the highest income brackets.

For the first time a reasonably reliable “cohort graduation rate” has become available for Washington State and King County school districts. It shows that less than two-thirds of those who began high school in 1999 graduated on time in 2003 - both in King County and in the state. A national study found a similar outcome for the class of 2001, placing Washington State 39th among the 50 states. It is a sign of distress for the long-term social and economic health of our region.

The trends in land use measures have been generally positive. We are building 96% of new housing units in the urban area. 21% of the new units are in the urban centers. While the urban center strategy has worked very well in the larger cities, more needs to be done to attract development – both housing and commercial – to urban centers in the suburban cities. Two new urban centers have recently been designated in Burien and the Totem Lake area of Kirkland. There has been significant and steady improvement in the efficiency of our use of urban land, as evidenced by the rate of use of redevelopable land, and by an increase in densities in new single and multi-family developments.





The efficient use of our existing land means that there is ample room to meet growth targets well beyond 2022. This has allowed us to maintain the levels of forest and farmland that existed in 1996, and to preserve much of that resource land from any further development.

Housing has actually become more affordable in the last several years, due to low interest rates, and falling rents.

The executive summary provided in this chapter highlights the most significant trends reported since last fall. The Affordable Housing trends are drawn from the report published in December 2003, followed by the Transportation and Environmental Indicators published in the spring of 2004. The Land Use data are from the August 2004 report (the first of the ninth annual series). The Economic Indicators are the most recent data being prepared for publication in early October 2004. The highlights published in this summary chapter are only a selection of the data published in the full reports.

Indicator Arrows

Up and down arrow symbols are used to show whether the direction of change has been primarily positive or negative or difficult to determine. It is not always easy to see a trend or to judge its long-term significance, so it is important to review the data in the full reports carefully, in order to understand why a particular arrow has been assigned. Note that a higher numerical measure may mean a trend in a negative direction: e.g. a higher percent in poverty indicates a negative trend. This would be indicated with a down arrow.

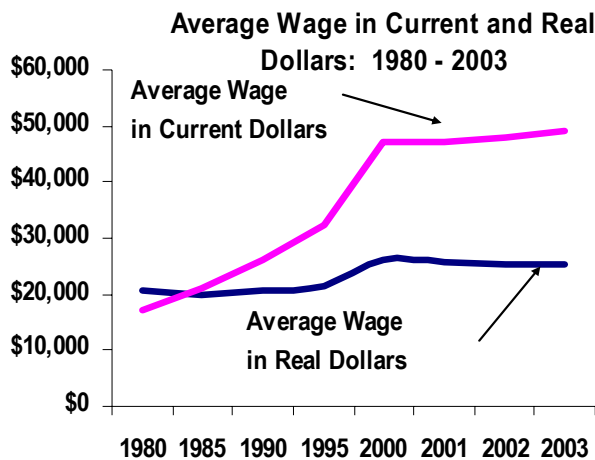
	There has been a long-term trend in a positive direction, or most recent data shows a marked improvement		There has been a long-term negative trend, or most recent data shows a significant downturn
	There has been little significant movement in this Indicator, or the trend has been mixed.		There is insufficient reliable trend data for this Indicator

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Outcome: Promote Family Wage Jobs



Indicator 1. Real Wages Per Worker

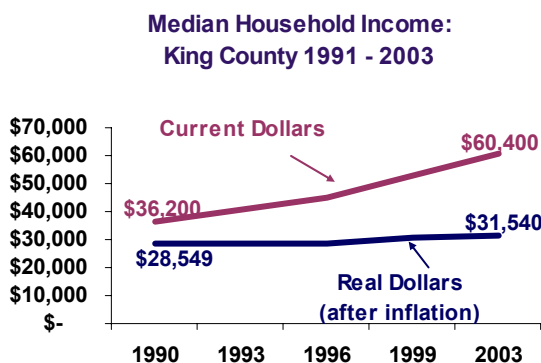


- In 2003, King County’s average annual wage per worker rose slightly in real (after inflation) dollars, compared to 2002.
- After a decade of growth in real wages, they reached a peak in 1999, declined slightly in 2000 - 2002, and are once again on the upswing.
- In current dollars, the average wage in King County was \$49,000 in 2003.
- Wages in the software publishing sector were about \$169,000 in 2003, much higher than in other sectors.
- When the software sector is excluded, the average wage in King County was \$44,300. Wages (in current dollars) increased 2.3% from 2002 to 2003.
- Although many households have more than one employed worker, about 35% of all households have total (combined) incomes of less than the \$43,000 living or “family” wage needed to provide basic support for one or two workers with two dependents.

Outcome: Increase Income and Reduce Poverty



Indicator 2. Personal and Median Household Income

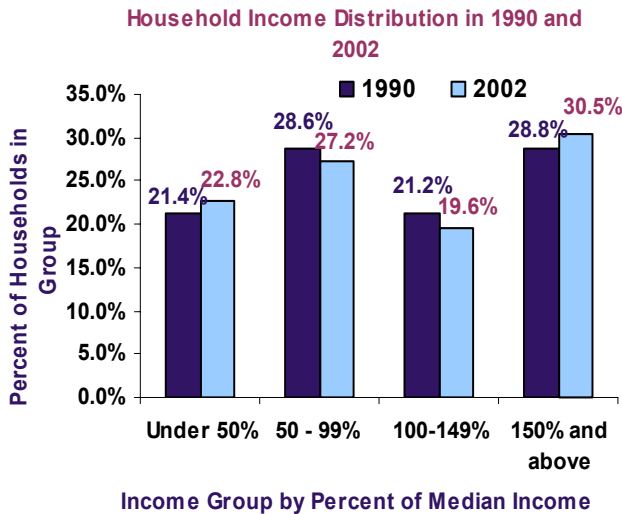


- Median household income for King County in 2003 is estimated to be \$60,400. This is a downward revision of the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates of the past several years. It reflects a more realistic assessment of the effects of the recession from 2001 – 2003.
- Even with this revision, both current dollar and real dollar income is higher in 2003 than it was in 2000. Although unemployment has hovered between 6% and 7% for this period, wages for those who are employed have continued to rise modestly.
- King County median household income is currently about 140% of the U.S. median household income.

Outcome: Increase Income and Reduce Poverty



Indicator 3. Percent of Population Below the Poverty Level



- King County's poverty rate at 9.2% remains significantly lower than the national rate of 12.4%.
- However, the national rate has declined by a full percentage point since 1990, while the King County rate has risen one and a half percentage points.
- The distribution of income in the County has changed as well. There are fewer households in the middle income groups and more households in the lowest and highest income groups compared to 1990.
- The poorest households - those earning under 30% of median income (less than \$16,500) - have grown from 11.1% of all households to 13.2%. This means about 15,000 more households are very low income.
- At the same time, nearly 2% more households now earn over 150% of the median income.

Outcome: Increase Educational Skill Levels



Indicator 8. High School Cohort Graduation Rate

Cohort Graduation Rate in King County School Districts: 2003		
School District	Class of 2003	
	Remaining in School at end of Grade 12	On-Time Cohort Graduation Rate
Auburn	77.1%	75.8%
Bellevue	91.8%	78.4%
Enumclaw	92.6%	88.8%
Federal Way	79.2%	61.6%
Highline	52.9%	43.2%
Issaquah	96.6%	86.0%
Kent	70.9%	67.7%
Lake Washington	95.4%	84.8%
Mercer Island	99.7%	95.2%
Northshore	97.7%	86.4%
Renton	69.7%	59.2%
Riverview	92.3%	88.5%
Seattle	71.5%	50.2%
Shoreline	92.3%	82.7%
Skykomish	80.0%	80.0%
Snoqualmie Valley	78.0%	53.8%
South Central	80.4%	66.7%
Tahoma	74.8%	62.8%
Vashon	84.3%	77.9%
Total KC	79.0%	66.3%

- The rate of King County students in the class of 2003 graduating "on time" was 66.3%. The denominator for this measure is students beginning 9th grade in 1999 in King County public schools, minus transfers out, and plus transfers in.
- While about 21% of the 2003 cohort dropped out sometime during their high school career, at the end of 2003, 79.0% of the cohort were still enrolled in high school. With 66.3% of the original cohort graduating on time, 12.7% remained in high school.
- The remaining (or "continuing") students are those who had not yet successfully completed all graduation requirements. Although some of these may finish in a few months, and others in the course of another year of high school, many are not likely to graduate at all.
- According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, a large number of the continuing students are in special education, or are non-native English speakers who may take a long time to graduate, or may never receive a diploma
- There continue to be large differences in graduation and dropout rates among different school districts and groups. While Mercer Island's on-time graduation rate was 95.2%, Highline's was 43.2%.
- In King County only 36.5% of American Indians, and about 42% of Black and Hispanic students graduated with their cohort. These groups fared slightly better at the state level, where 42% of American Indians, and 48 - 50% of Black and Hispanic students graduated on time.
- A 2002 nationwide study by the Manhattan Institute put the nationwide 2001 cohort graduation rate at 70%, and Washington State's at 66%. Washington ranked 39th among 50 states in its public school graduation rate.

LAND USE

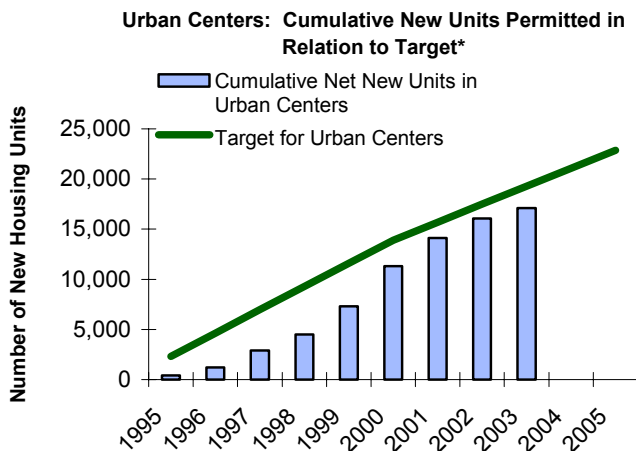
Outcome: Encourage a Greater Share of Growth in Urban Areas and Urban Centers

Limit Growth in Rural / Resource Areas

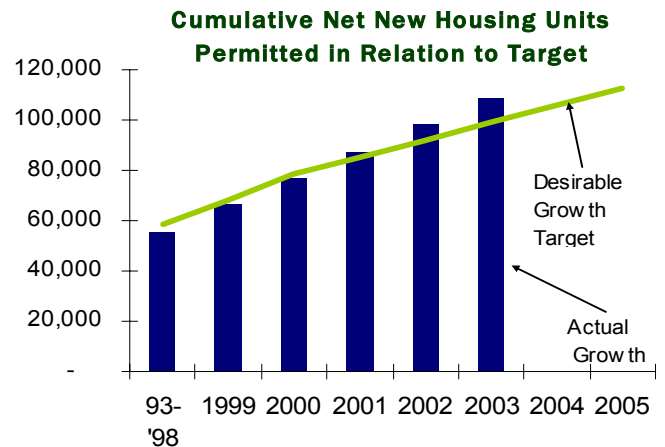


Indicator 30. Percent of New Housing Units in Urban Areas, Rural Areas, and Urban Centers

- Between 1996 and 2002, the percent of residential growth in the rural areas was cut in half – from 8% to 4% of all new housing units. In 2003 that lower rate of rural development has held steady.
- While the recent recession has slowed development in urban centers, over the last nine years the urban centers have attracted about 21% of all new units, just short of the target percentage of 25%.
- Countywide housing unit growth is proceeding at a rate somewhat higher than needed to meet the 2022 housing unit target.
- The current target is for approximately 158,000 new housing units to be built from 2000 - 2022. After three years - 14% of the planning period - King County has permitted 32,000 units, or over 20% of the new target.
- The sub-regions have met from 18% - 24% of their targets for the 22-year period. All the sub-regions are ahead of schedule in permitting new units.



*Target is 25% of the target for all new housing units. It amounts to about 1795 units per year in the urban centers. The target was adjusted in 2002.



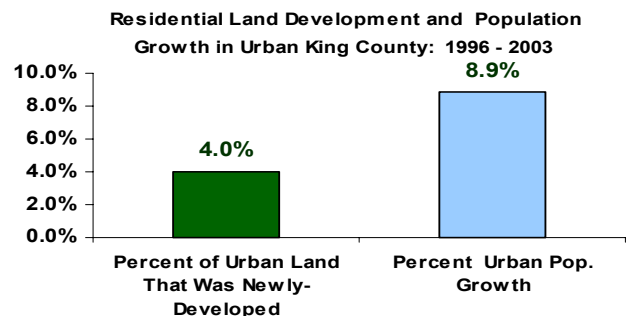
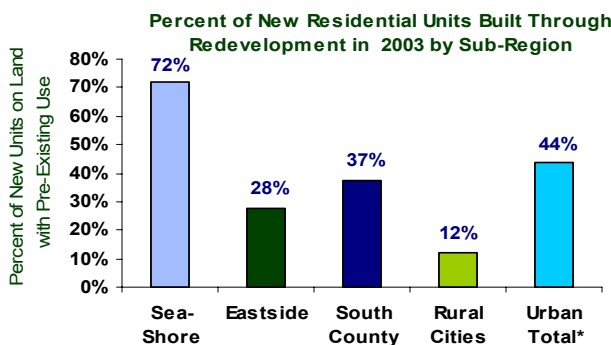
Outcome: Make Efficient Use of Urban Land

Indicator 32: Percent of New Residential Units Built Through Redevelopment;

Indicator 34: Ratio of Land Consumption to Population Growth



- In 2003, about 43% of all new residential units were permitted on land that had a pre-existing use. In the urban area, the proportion was about 44%. Because it is not easy to trace a pre-existing use on land, these figures should be considered a conservative estimate.
- During the eight years from 1996 – 2003, King County’s urban population has grown 8.9%, averaging about 1.1% per year. In this same period, about 4% of urban land was newly developed or “consumed”. This amounts to 0.5% per year.



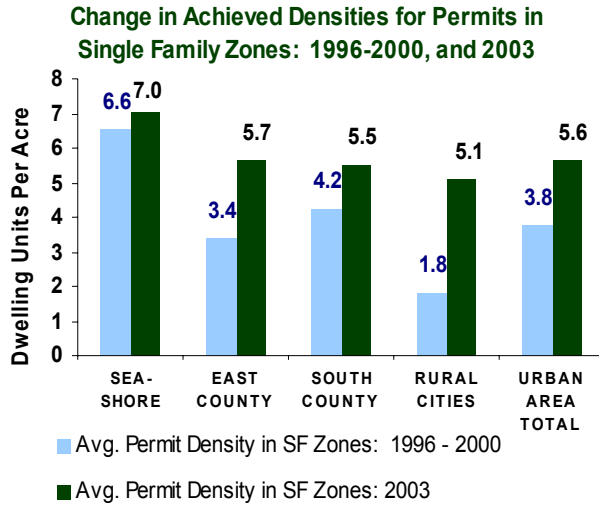
This graph shows a lower percentage development of urban land and of urban population than was shown last year. This is due to revised figures for both land development and population data, as well as to an additional year's data.

Outcome: Make Efficient Use of Urban Land

Indicator 34: Trend in Achieved Density of Residential Development

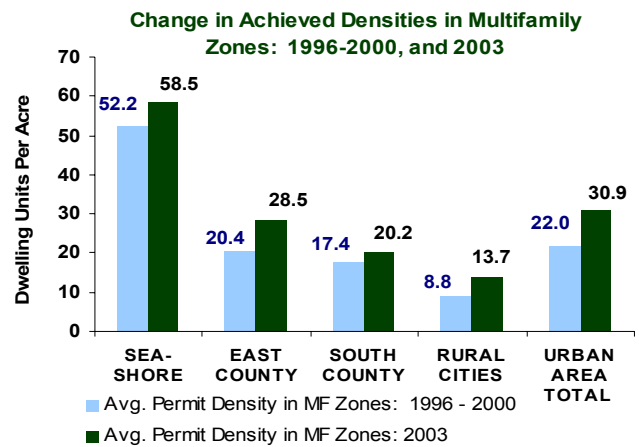


- Densities achieved by new permits in single family zones have increased from 3.8 dwelling unit (DU) per acre in the 1996 - 2000 period to 5.6 DU in 2003.



- These zones contribute significantly to the overall higher single family densities. They are often town-home or cottage-style housing.
- Permit densities in multifamily zones were also higher in every sub-region than in the 1996 – 2000 period.
- The increase in the average densities for both single and multifamily areas indicates that urban land is being used with greater efficiency. This helps to conserve urban land for future growth, and to protect rural land for rural uses.

- Permit densities increased in every sub-region from 1996-2000 levels.
- Nearly 1,400 new single family units were created in zones allowing 8 or more DU / acre.



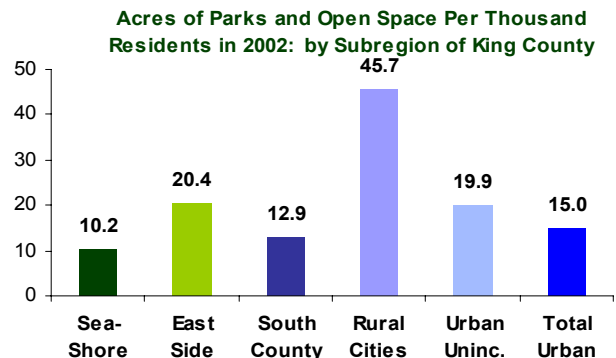
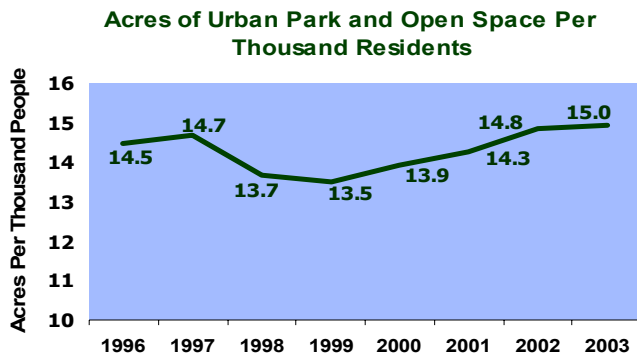
Outcome: Encourage Livable, Diverse Communities

Indicator 37: Acres of Urban Parks and Open Space



- King County has over 24,500 acres of urban parks and open space, compared to 22,000 in 1996. This is an increase of about 11% in eight years.
- During this same period, the urban population has grown by just 8.9%, resulting in a net gain of park space per resident.
- There are now about 15.0 acres of parks and open space per one thousand urban residents.

- The rapid increase in population during the late 1990s caused a short-term decline in the number of acres per thousand residents, but as population has leveled off, the urban region has regained a healthy ratio of parks to resident.
- The rural cities and Eastside have more generous amounts of parkland per resident, while Sea-Shore and the South County have considerably less.



ENVIRONMENT

Outcome: Protect and Enhance Natural Ecosystems



Indicator 9: Land Cover Changes in Urban and Rural Areas Over Time

- King County has lost about 2% of its forest cover since 1994. Much of the net loss in the rural forest area probably occurred before 1996. In the 1972 to 1996 period, forest land is estimated to have decreased by as much as 33%.
- 2001 Landsat data shows 29,400 acres of recently-regenerated forest, equal to 3.4% of the total forested area. It shows just 6,150 acres of recent clear-cut, amounting to 0.7% of the total forest cover. It appears that forest regeneration is proceeding at a rate well over that of recent clear-cutting.
- Vegetative cover, especially forest, performs significant ecological functions. It absorbs, filters, and slows surface water flow; it provides wildlife and fish habitat, and it helps to offset the negative effects of the CO₂ emissions which drive climate change. As forest and vegetative cover are replaced by impervious surface (roads and buildings) these functions are lost, often irreversibly.
- In the urban area of King County, the rate of increase of impervious surface has accelerated over the last 20 years. By 1994, over 25% of the urban area was

already paved or built, and by 2001, 31% had been paved or built.

- King County’s rural and forest areas remain relatively undeveloped, however, and can continue to perform the critical ecological functions for the region as long as they are preserved.
- King County is purchasing 90,000 acres of the Snoqualmie Forest to preserve it from development.

Increase in Impervious Surface and Loss of Forest Cover in King County: 1994 - 2001						
	Acres Gained or Lost*	Chg as % of total Cty land area	Estimated Total Acres in this category in 1994	1994 Total as % of Urban Area	Estimated Total in 2001	2001 Total as % of Urban Area
Impervious Surface (gain)	15,524	1.1%	75,576	25.7%	91,100	31.0%
Forest Cover (net loss)	(26,772)	-2.0%	897,772		871,000	

*This analysis depends on classification of Landsat data. The method used identifies the landcover type at a resolution of about 1,075 sq. yards or 20% of an acre. It detects changes in classification (i.e. predominant land cover) for areas about that size.

Outcome: Improve Air Quality

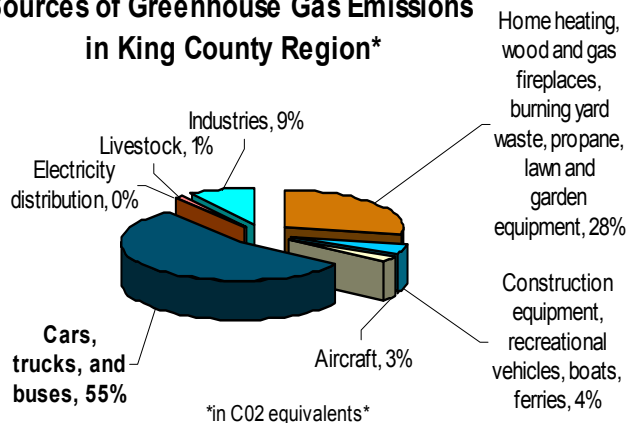


Indicator 10: Changes in Air Quality and Climate

- Greenhouse gases, or GHGs, are released when humans burn fossil fuels to generate electricity and to power vehicles, as well as when waste is disposed.
- At least 55% of King County GHG emissions are from motor vehicles. Diesel emissions also contribute 79% of the cancer risk from air toxics.

- Climate change is caused by increases in the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere. GHGs warm the earth and cause climate disruptions.
- Global mean surface temperatures have increased about 1.0° F since the late 19th century. They are predicted to rise from 1° to 4.5° F in the next 50 years. The sea level which rose by 4” – 8” in the last century is predicted to rise anywhere from 4” to 36” in this century. The eight warmest years on record have all occurred in the past nine years, i.e. 1995 – 2003.
- Scientists project that, due to rising temperatures, the Pacific Northwest can expect higher temperatures, wetter winters, drier summers, reduced river flows, and increased coastal flooding and erosion. Snowpack – our natural storage system for water supply and hydroelectricity – is likely to decline by half within the next 50 – 75 years.
- Motor vehicles, diesel engines, and wood-burning are also the main contributors to air pollution from particulate matter, which aggravates asthma, lung and heart disease.

Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in King County Region*



Outcome: Improve Air Quality



Indicator 11: Energy Consumption

- In King County, per capita energy consumption from the four main sources – electricity, natural gas, automotive gas and diesel – increased 0.5% from 1996 - 2003.
- All of the increase, however, was in motor vehicle fuels, while per capita use of electricity and natural gas actually declined.
- During the same period, total energy consumption (not per capita) rose 8.8%, while the population grew about 8.0%.

Change in King County Energy Consumption per Capita by Energy Type: 1996 - 2003				
In Millions of BTU's	1996	2001	2003	% Chg 1996- 2003
Electricity	40.3	38.5	38.1	-5.2%
Natural Gas	36.4	35.2	33.7	-7.4%
Gasoline	54.1	57.3	56.5	4.3%
Diesel Fuel	11.0	14.3	14.1	28.4%
Per Capita Energy Consumption	141.8	145.3	142.5	0.5%

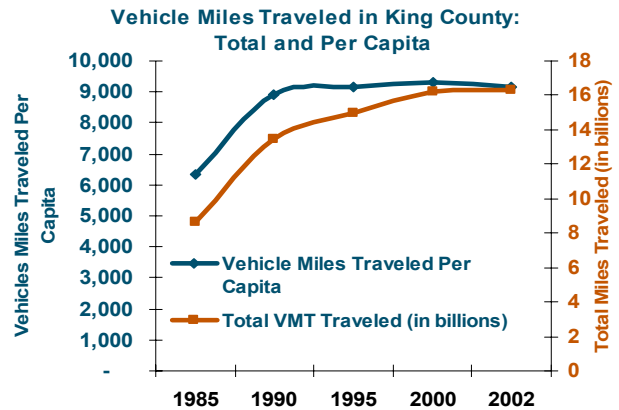
Outcome: Improve Air Quality



Indicator 12: Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

- In 2002, vehicles in King County traveled a total of 16.3 billion miles. This is 90% more than the number of miles traveled in King County in 1985. The population has grown by only 31% during the 1985 – 2002 period.
- The number of miles traveled *per capita* has leveled off since 1995. VMT rose 44% from 1985, when the *per capita* VMT was 6,344 miles, to 1995, when it was 9,154. It rose just 0.2% from 1995 to 2002.
- Despite the stabilizing of per capita VMT, more vehicles are traveling more miles, using up more gasoline and diesel fuel, and continuing to emit a high volume of pollutants into the air. The fuel efficiency of the 2002 new vehicle fleet was the lowest since 1980.
- 53% of all air pollution is caused by vehicle emissions, and diesel soot is responsible for 79% of

the cancer risk from toxic emissions in our area. At least 55% of greenhouse gas emissions in King County are from vehicles.



Outcome: Protect Water Quality and Quantity

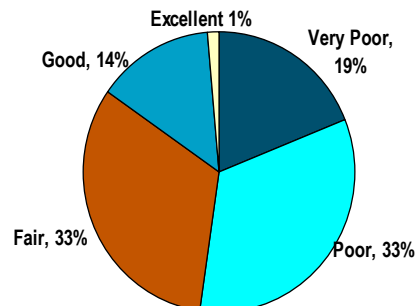


Indicator 13: Surface Water Quality

- 52% of the sampled streams in King County are in poor or very poor condition.
- One-third of the streams are in fair condition, while just 15% are in good or excellent condition.
- The overall trend has been downward, especially for the number of stations receiving a good or excellent rating.
- King County has set a five-year target of reducing the number of poor and very poor stations to under 50%, and raising the number of stream stations rated as good or excellent to 18%.
- Generally, the sub-basins that are completely within the urban (developed) area tend to be in poor or very

poor condition. Those that are on the fringes of the urban area are in fair condition. Rural streams are in better condition.

Percent of Stream Stations in Each Condition Category



Outcome: Protect the Diversity of Plants and Wildlife

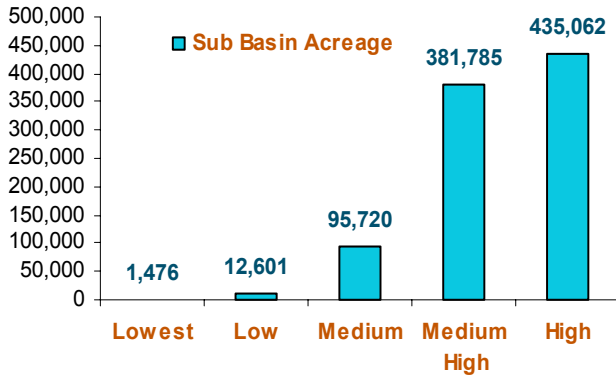
Indicator 17: Continuity of Terrestrial and Aquatic Habitat Networks



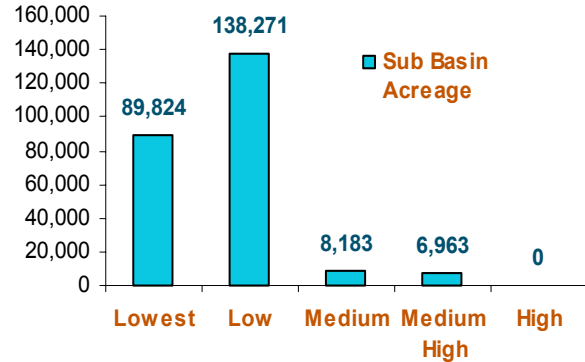
- Habitat quality, along with water quality and quantity, provide the core building blocks for a healthy, functioning ecosystem, and for achieving long-term environmental results such as salmonid recovery.
- In rural sub-basins, 88% of the total acreage is in the medium-high or high quality quintiles.

- Habitat quality as indicated by measures of road density and forest cover, is dramatically better in rural sub-basins of King County than in the urban sub-basins, where most habitat is of low quality.

Rural Sub Basin Acreage by Quality of Habitat



Urban Sub Basin Acreage by Quality of Habitat



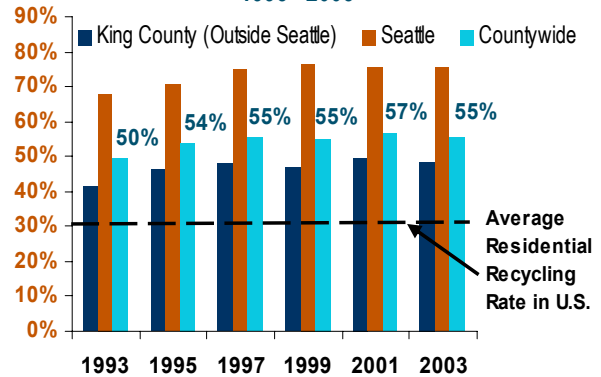
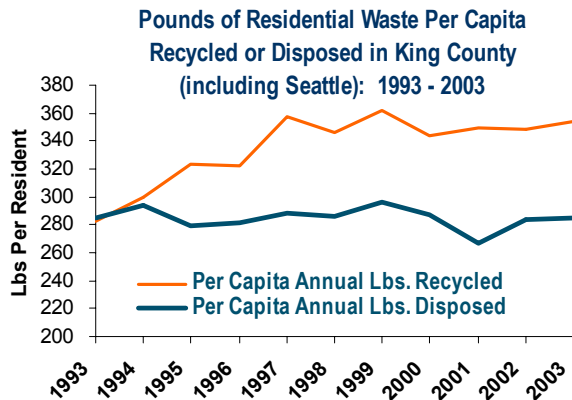
Outcome: Decrease Waste Disposal and Increase Recycling

Indicator 20: Pounds of Waste Disposed and Recycled Per Capita



- King County households recycled approximately 25% more waste per capita in 2003 than in 1993. Per capita disposal of waste remained about the same.

Residential Recycling Rates in King County: 1993 - 2003



- King County now recycles 55% of its residential waste, while the U.S. average for residential recycling is about 30%.
- In 2003, Seattle recycled 75% of its household waste, while King County outside of Seattle recycled about 49%.

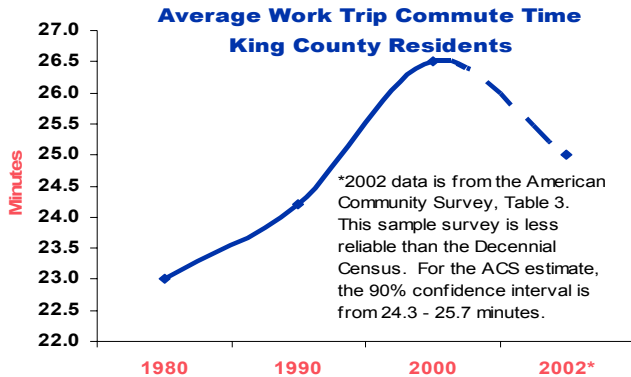
- There is a notable downward trend in total commercial waste per employee in Seattle, from over 1,141 lbs. per employee in 1990 to 906 lbs per employee in 2002.
- King County is also initiating programs to reduce the disposal of commercial paper, and to improve food waste collection for households and commercial users.

TRANSPORTATION

Outcome: Encourage Linkages Between Residences, Commercial Centers, and Job Locations ↔

Indicator 41: Average Commute Lengths in King County

- The average commute trip for King County residents appears to have dropped from 26.5 minutes in 2000 to 25.0 minutes in 2002. Differences in measurement tools, however, may affect the reliability and comparability of these two commute times.



- All of the morning peak commutes on these five routes were longer in 2002 than in 2000, while three out of five evening peak commutes were shorter.

Heavily-Traveled Highway Commutes in King County						
Major Destination and Return Commute Trip	Average Travel Time at AM Peak		Average Travel Time at PM Peak		Total Commute Time at AM and PM Peak	
	2000	2002	2000	2002	2000	2002
Tukwilla to Bellevue am Bellevue to Tukwilla pm on I-405	23	30	27	25	50	55
Seattle to Bellevue am, Bellevue to Seattle pm over SR-520	17	18	20	22	37	40
Bellevue to Seattle am, Seattle to Bellevue pm over SR-520	15	17	19	18	34	35
Seattle to Bellevue am, Bellevue to Seattle pm over I-90	13	16	20	22	33	38
Auburn to Renton am Renton to Auburn pm on SR-167	12	15	21	19	33	34

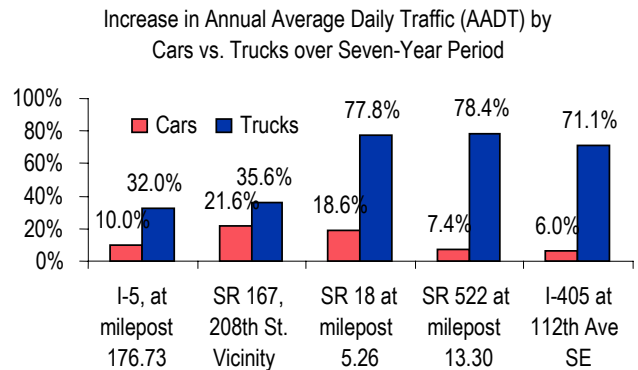
- While King County's overall commute times have declined slightly from 2000 to 2002, travel times on the busiest highway routes have increased slightly.

- The 2004 Urban Mobility report by the Texas Transportation Institute indicated that in the Seattle area, the time a rush-hour commuter lost in traffic was down 27% from 1992.

Outcome: Improve Ability of Goods and Services to Move Through the Region ↔

Indicator 41: Amount of Congestion Affecting Commercial and non-Commercial Traffic

- Growth in the Puget Sound economy brings more commercial traffic through King County in addition to more personal and commute trips.
- Over the seven years from 1995 – 2002, truck traffic has increased faster than car traffic, rising from an average of about 5.2% on major King County highways, to 7.6% in 2001 – 2002.
- The greatest increase in truck traffic, 78% higher than it was seven years ago, has been on SR 522 near Woodinville, and on SR 18 near Auburn. Truck traffic has increased 71% on I-405 in South Bellevue.



Outcome: Protect and Improve Transportation Infrastructure ↓

Indicator 45: Number of Lane Miles of City, County, and State Roads and Bridges in Need of Repair and Preservation

Summary of Lane Miles of County and City Roads in King County in Need of Overlay, Repavement or Reconstruction: 2004 - 2005*							
Score to Identify Segments for Overlay, Repaving, or Reconstruction	Total Lane Miles Reported	Lane Miles In Need of Repaving/ Rehab.	Percent of Total Lane Miles in Need of Repavement / Rehab.	Lane Miles Currently Budgeted for Repave or Rehab.	Percent of Need Being Met (by Lane Miles)	Est. Cost per Lane Mile (Average)*	Percent of Need Met (by cost)
Average for Jurisdictions: <60 on 100 pt. scale	6,921	667	9.6%	477	71.5%	\$ 90,831	71.3%

- About 10% of the lane miles in King County have received a condition rating which signals the need for overlay, repavement, or complete reconstruction.

- There are current plans to repave or reconstruct about 71% of them. This defers needed work on 29%, mainly due to budget limitations.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

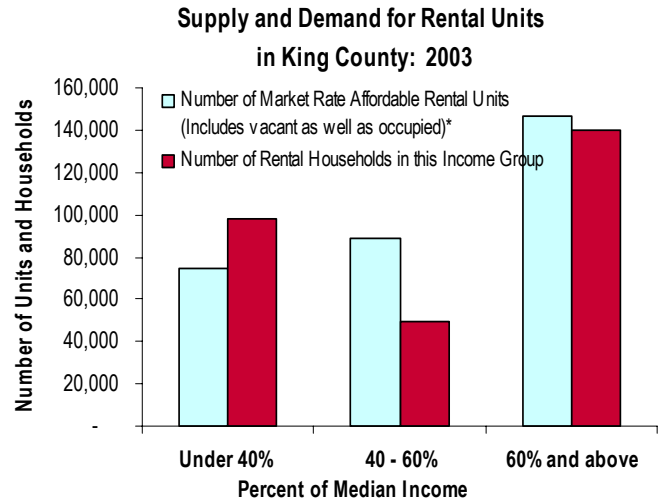
*Note: Affordability is defined according to median household income. In January 2004 HUD revised downward its estimate of King County median household income. The measures below were calculated in 2003 based on estimates of median income for 2001 – 2003 that were unrealistically high. As a consequence, housing was probably less affordable to many low and moderate income families than these measures indicate. This will be corrected in 2004.

Outcome: Provide Sufficient Affordable Housing for All King County Residents



Indicator 21: Supply and Demand for Affordable Rental Housing

- The greatest deficit in rental housing is for those who earn less than 30% of median income (about \$19,600 for a household of 2 – 3 persons). A household supported by a full-time worker earning up to \$10 per hour would be in this group. These households could afford a maximum of \$500 per month for rent.
- There were 74,300 households in this lowest income group, and another 24,000 households in the group earning from 30% to 40% of median income. There was a combined deficit of about 23,700 units for these two groups. Market-rate housing is unlikely to meet this need.
- Changes in federal regulations may mean the loss of Section 8 rental vouchers for many households. Unless the supply of subsidized housing is maintained and expanded, particularly for those earning below 40% of median income, tens of thousands of households will not be able to find housing they can afford.

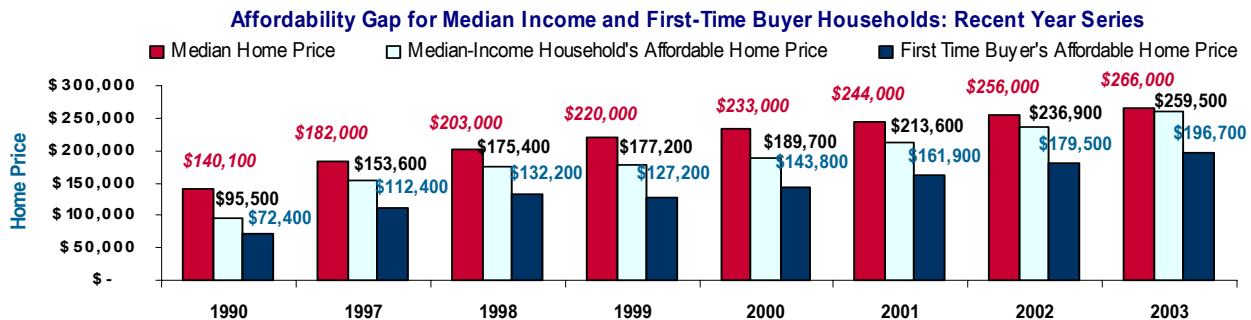


*There are approximately 30,000 subsidized rental units in King County. Most of them are not included in this market rate unit count.

Outcome: Increase Affordable Home Ownership Opportunities



Indicator 24: Home Purchase Affordability Gap for Typical First-Time Buyers and for Buyers with Median Income



- In 2003 the median selling price for all homes in King County – both detached single-family and condos – was \$266,000.
- There remains a gap between the median home value in King County and the amount that either median-income households or first-time buyer households can afford.
- However, the affordability gap has decreased significantly in the past few years, due primarily to falling interest rates. Overall, homes were more affordable in 2003 than they have been over the last 10 – 12 years.
- Not since 1970 could a household with median income easily afford the median-priced home.
- Based on recent year data from actual home sales in King County, the affordability gap for a median income household, at just \$6,500, was nearly closed in 2003.
- The typical first-time buyer, earning about 80% of median income, faced a gap of \$69,000 in 2003. This meant that the median-priced home cost 35% more than the first-time buyer could afford. In 1990, however, the median-priced home cost twice what the first-time buyer could afford.

Outcome: Provide Sufficient Affordable Housing for All King County Residents

Indicator 26: Apartment Vacancy Rate



Average Apartment Vacancy Rates in King County Subareas				
	North	South	East	County
1995	4.0%	4.7%	4.5%	5.0%
1997	2.6%	2.5%	2.7%	2.8%
1999	3.6%	3.8%	3.1%	3.9%
2001	4.6%	4.1%	4.3%	4.7%
2003	6.6%	8.1%	7.1%	7.5%

- The average vacancy rate in King County was 7.5% in 2003, down very slightly from the extraordinarily high 7.7% vacancy rate of 2002. By spring of 2004, the rate had declined again to 7.1%. A 5% vacancy rate is generally regarded as a normal market rate.

- High vacancy rates generally mean downward pressure on rents. The average rent for all types of units declined from \$866 in 2002 to \$855 in 2003. In the spring of 2004, it was down further to an average of \$840 for all units.
- As housing supply catches up with or passes demand, vacancies increase and rents stabilize. The opposite is true during periods like the late 1990s when the demand for rental housing outstripped the supply, and rents rose rapidly.
- Vacancy rates in the sub-regions generally follow the countywide trend, but the swings in vacancy rates appear to be somewhat sharper in the South County. Ballard and Madison/Leschi still had low vacancy rates of 3.8% and 2.2% respectively, but nearly all other areas of the County had vacancy rates over 6%.

Outcome: Promote Equitable Distribution of Affordable Low-Income Housing in King County



Indicator 29: Existing Housing Units Affordable to Low Income Households

Number of Cities with Sufficient Affordable Housing by Region					
	Very Low Income	Low Income	Moderate Income	Insufficient for any Group	Total Number of Jurisdictions
SeaShore	0	2	3	0	3
Eastside	0	0	7	8	15
South	0	11	14	0	14
Rural Cities	1	3	6	1	7
Uninc. King Cty	0	0	1	0	1
All of King	1	16	31	9	40

- In 2003, sixteen of King County's forty jurisdictions had sufficient affordable housing for low-income households, those earning about 50% of median income.
- Eleven of the cities with sufficient housing for this low income group are in the South County sub-area. Low

income housing remains concentrated in fewer than half of the County's jurisdictions.

- No Eastside cities meet the target for existing units affordable to low-income households.
- Those earning 50 – 79% of median income are considered moderate income households. 31 out of the 40 King County jurisdictions have sufficient affordable housing for moderate income households.
- Only one city, Skykomish, had sufficient affordable housing for very low income households – those earning 30% of median income or less.
- About 13% of the households in the County earn less than 30% of median income, while 23% earn under 50% of median income. 39% of all households earn less than 80% of median income.
- To meet demand from these households, the County-wide Planning Policies specify that each jurisdiction should provide an equivalent proportion of its housing that will be affordable to those groups, i.e. 23% for those under 50% of median income, and 39% for those below 80% of median income.

For information about the Benchmark Report or the Benchmark Program, please contact Rose Curran, Benchmark Program Coordinator (206) 205-0715; e-mail: rose.curran@metrokc.gov. The Benchmark Program address is King County Office of Management and Budget, Room 402, King County Courthouse, Seattle, WA 98104